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ABSTRACT

For the past 25 years, the Gallup Organization and Phi Delta Kappa (PDK), a national fraternity of educators, have conducted an annual poll of opinion on education and educational issues in the United States. This report presents findings of the poll, which was adapted for and conducted in North Carolina in 1993. Data were collected through telephone interviews with 803 North Carolina adults. Respondents said that the most troubling problem confronting public schools is school safety. Overall, North Carolina schools received favorable grades for their performance. Other highlights include the following: (1) North Carolinians clearly favor the use of national standardized tests; (2) large majorities believe that public schools should provide extended services for children; (3) solid majorities said they would be willing to pay more taxes to ensure preschool programs for poor children and to improve schools in poorer communities; and (4) 75 percent believed that people in their community could agree on a set of basic values to be taught in the public schools. However, agreement on values collapsed when the topics of sexual orientation and abortion were introduced. Thirty-nine tables are included. (Author/LMI)

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THE 1993 NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATION POLL

A STATE ADAPTATION OF THE 1993 PHI DELTA KAPPA/GALLUP POLL

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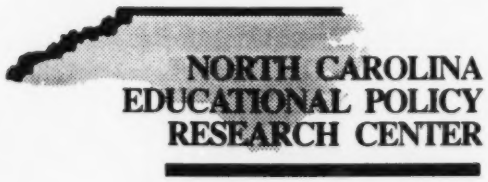

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THE 1993 NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATION POLL

A STATE ADAPTATION OF THE 1993 PHI DELTA KAPPA/GALLUP EDUCATION POLL

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October, 1993

For the past quarter century, the Gallup Organization and Phi Delta Kappa (PDK), a national fraternity of educators, have conducted an annual poll of opinion on education and educational issues in the United States. This year, with the cooperation of PDK, in conjunction with the North Carolina Educational Policy Research Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the support of the North Carolina State Board of Education, the Gallup Organization replicated the national poll in North Carolina and added several questions to be asked only in the North Carolina poll. The replication of the poll allowed for both an analysis of public opinion in North Carolina and a comparison of results from the North Carolina poll with those found in the national poll.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE POLL

Of all the educational problems confronting public schools, the one most troubling to North Carolinians is concern for a safe environment in the schools. When asked to name the biggest problems facing their communities' schools, respondents in the 1993 North Carolina Gallup/PDK education poll cited lack of discipline, fighting and violence, and use of drugs most frequently. The importance of a safe school environment was also reflected in answers to other questions. North Carolinians placed a high priority on all six national education goals adopted in 1990 by President Bush and the Nation's governors, but no goal received higher support than the one calling for violence free schools.

In other highlights of the poll:

- Overall, local North Carolina schools received favorable grades for their performance. Seventy percent of parents graded the school attended by their eldest child either an A or B. The school system in the respondents' communities received an A or B from 42%. As has been true in earlier national polls, public schools closer to home were rated most highly. Only 35% of those polled graded North Carolina's public schools A or B, and only 25% graded the Nation's schools A or B.

- North Carolinians clearly favor the use of national standardized tests. They want the schools to use standardized tests to identify areas where teachers need to improve and where students need extra help. They were more interested in tests being used to help schools rather than to classify them and to improve the educational process rather than to measure the product of schooling.

- Large majorities said that the public schools should provide extended services for children including: after-school care for children of working parents, examinations to detect sight and hearing defects and dental needs, inoculations against communicable diseases, and free and low-cost breakfasts and lunches. North Carolinians favored publicly supported programs for preschool children as part of the public schools.

- One of the themes emerging from the poll is a sustained public concern about poor children. This concern became apparent in answers to questions about providing health and social services in the schools, establishing preschool programs, and addressing disparities between richer and poorer school systems. Solid majorities said they would be willing to pay more taxes to assure preschool programs for poor children and to improve schools in poorer communities.

- Three quarters of the people believed that people in their community could agree on a set of basic values to be taught in the public schools. When asked about twelve specific values, very large majorities said they believed those values should be taught in their public schools. However, the agreement collapsed when the topics of sexual orientation and abortion were introduced.

More details on these findings, on responses to questions about other issues, and on comparisons between the North Carolina and National polls are included in the following pages.

GRADING THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Gallup/PDK poll has historically asked respondents to grade the schools in their communities.

Students are often given the grade of A, B,C,D, or Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves in your community were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here?

Grade	North Carolina %	National 1993 %	National 1992 %
A or B	42	47	40
A	8	10	9
B	34	37	31
C	36	31	33
D	12	11	12
Fail	4	4	5
Don't know	6	7	10

From 1984 through 1992, the percentage of respondents grading the public schools either A or B remained stable, between 40 and 43 percent. This year's increase to 47% represents a twenty year high in national public confidence in their communities schools. North Carolina's response is somewhat lower at the ranks of A and B. Both polls had 78% rating their communities' schools as "C" or higher.

Three follow-up questions asked North Carolinians to rank the school their oldest child attends (parents only), schools in the State of North Carolina, and schools in the nation as a whole. The following table includes the results of the four questions:

North Carolina Citizens and Parents Grade the Public Schools

Grade	Parents Only: Public School Attended by Oldest Child %	All North Carolina Respondents: Schools in Your Community %	Public Schools in North Carolina %	Public Schools Nationally %
A or B	70	42	35	25
A	26	8	6	3
B	44	34	29	22
C	20	36	46	46
D	6	12	12	16
Fail	3	4	4	6
Don't know	2	6	2	7

North Carolinians are most satisfied with the school or schools with which they are most knowledgeable. By a wide margin, public school parents rate the school their eldest child attends quite favorably. Seventy percent gave it an A or B and 90% assigned a grade of C or better. Lack of confidence diminishes by distance until, finally, only 25% of North Carolinians rate public schools nationally as above average. This phenomenon has been true for as long as the Gallup/PDK poll has been administered.

National poll responses were as follows:

National Citizens and Parents Grade the Public Schools

	Parents Only	All Respondents	
Grade	Public School Attended by Oldest Child %	Schools in Your Community %	Schools in the Nation as a Whole %
A or B	72	47	19
A	27	10	2
B	45	37	17
C	18	31	48
D	5	11	17
Fail	2	4	4
Don't know	3	7	12

Across-the-board, the grading of schools in the national poll was slightly higher than in the North Carolina poll. There was also a marked difference between the two polls by ethnicity. Nationally 48% of white respondents assigned an A or B to their communities' schools while only 37% of minority respondents did so. In North Carolina, in contrast, more minority respondents rated their communities' schools as A or B than did whites, 47% to 41%. At the other end of the scale, 22% of minorities nationally ranked their communities' schools a D or Fail; only 11% did so in North Carolina.

Biggest Problems Facing the Schools

Each year the Gallup/PDK education poll asks respondents to identify the biggest problems facing their public schools. Respondents list up to five problems. The table below lists all the problems cited by five percent or more of the respondents in either the 1993 state or national polls.

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in this community must deal?

	North Carolina			National	
Rank	Problem	Respondents Citing %	Rank	Problem	Respondents Citing %
1	Lack of discipline, more control	23	1	Lack of financial support	21
2	Fighting/ violence/ gangs	21	2	Use of drugs	16
3	Use of drugs	20	3	Lack of discipline, more control	15
4	Lack of financial support	10	4	Fighting/ violence/ gangs	13
5	Integration/ segregation problems/ racial discreimination	7	5	Concern about standards/ quality of education	9
6	Concern about standards/ quality of education	7	6	Overcrowded schools	8
7	Overcrowded schools	6	7	Difficulty getting good teachers	5
8	Difficulty getting good teachers	5	8	Integration/ segregation problems/ racial discrimination	4

Respondents in each poll selected the same four top problems. However, the dissimilarities are striking. Twice as many respondents in the national poll noted lack of financial support for schools as a major problem. North Carolinians were much more concerned with problems of student behavior and discipline—nearly one in four mentioned lack of discipline and more control as a major problem. This is especially important for school personnel, since this definition of the problem focuses clearly on the role of the school in controlling student behavior, whereas drugs and fighting, violence and gangs suggest community-based problems confronting the school. In both the North Carolina and national polls, younger respondents (18-29) were twice as likely as older respondents (50+) to express concern

about fighting, violence and gangs and only half as likely to mention lack of discipline and more control. This difference may reflect more personal experience by the younger respondents with behavior problems quite different from those in evidence a generation ago.

Although lack of discipline and use of drugs have been among the most frequently cited problems for a decade, fighting, violence and gangs has not. This category barely existed five years ago. In the 1988 national poll, "fighting" was cited by only one percent of the respondents. In the 1991 poll, three percent cited fighting, violence and gangs. That number tripled to nine percent in 1992, and rose to 13 percent this year.

The results reflect continuing national concern about discipline and drugs, a growing national concern about school violence, and even higher levels of concern for all three problems among North Carolinians.

Another way to reflect on the biggest problems cited is to examine problems noted by respondents that did not meet the five percent cut off. The following table lists problems cited by less than five but at least two percent of the respondents. They are ranked by the frequency of their appearance in the North Carolina poll.

Biggest Problems Facing the Schools Cited by Two to Four Percent of Poll Respondents

Problem	North Carolina	National
	Respondents Citing %	Respondents Citing %
Parents lack of support/ lack of interest	4	4
Lack of respect	4	2
Crime/ vandalism	4	2
Lack of family structure/ problems of home life	4	2
Pupils lack of interest/ attitudes/ truancy	4	4
Moral standards/ dress code/ sex/ in school pregnancy	3	3
Religious education	3	2
Poor curriculum/ low curriculum standards	3	2
Low pay for teachers/ teachers should be paid more salary	2	3
Busing	2	-
Lack of attention/ understanding for students	2	2
Large school/ too many classes	2	-
Better/ up-to-date equipment	-	2
More teachers/ not enough help	-	2
Problems with administration	-	2

There are some striking differences between the biggest problems cited by the public and those emphasized in current reform movements. Among the top eight mentioned by the respondents, concern about standards was relatively low (7%-9%) although it is a centerpiece of reform efforts at national and state levels. Parental support and family structures were seldom noted. Family structure and problems of home life were mentioned by only 2% of the respondents in the national poll, 4% in North Carolina. In both polls, parents lack of support and interest were cited by 4%. Poor curriculum/low curriculum standards were noted by 3% in North Carolina, 2% nationally. Not reaching the 2% cut off were parent involvement in school activities, parent/teacher relations, and lack of community support. However, parental involvement in schooling, family effects on schooling, curricular improvement, and community support are all emphasized in current reform proposals. Since the success of reform efforts rests on a concerned and informed citizenry, more extensive and critical exchanges between the public and policy makers would seem to be needed.

The Nation's Education Goals

In February, 1990, President Bush and the nation's governors agreed on six national goals for education to be attained by the year 2000. The Gallup/PDK education poll asked respondents in 1990, 1991 and again this year about the priority that should be placed on each goal during the 1990s. This year's question stated each goal and then asked: How high a priority do you think this goal should have for the remainder of the decade — very high, high, low, or very low?

How high a priority do you think this goal should have for the remainder of the decade — very high, high, low, or very low?

	Level of High Priority								
	Very High			High			Very High and High		
	North Carolina	National		North Carolina	National		North Carolina	National	
Goal	%	1993 %	1991 %	%	1993 %	1991 %	%	1993 %	1991 %
1. Ready to learn	44	41	52	45	48	38	89	89	90
2. Graduation rate	53	54	54	37	38	37	90	92	91
3. Subject competency	57	59	55	36	33	35	93	92	90
4. Math and science	43	45	43	47	43	41	90	88	84
5. Adult literacy	50	54	50	40	37	36	90	91	86
6. Drugs and violence	67	61	63	18	19	23	85	90	86

National Goals

Goal 1 — All children in America will start school ready to learn.

Goal 2 — The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%.

Goal 3 — American students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history and geography. In addition, every school will insure that all students will learn to use their minds well so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning and productive employment in our modern economy.

Goal 4 — U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.

Goal 5 — Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Goal 6 — Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

Roughly 90% of the respondents ranked all the goals very high and high in each of the three polls. The primacy of goal six has been evident since 1991, and is growing in urgency. In the 1993 poll, North Carolinians ranked a drug and violence free environment ten points higher than any other goal, and nationally it was twelve points higher than the second priority goal. This is not surprising in view of the increasing concern expressed about violence in the respondents' listing of the biggest problems facing schools.

Child Care and Support Services

Early Childhood Care

In the 1991 Gallup/PDK education poll, respondents were asked whether public schools should make preschool programs available to 3- and 4-year olds whose parents wish such programs. The programs would be supported by taxes. This year the question was modified to clarify the programs as "child care centers":

A proposal has been made to make child care centers available for all preschool children as part of the public school system. This program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?

	North Carolina					
		Ethnicity		Age		
	Total %	White %	Minority %	18-29 %	30-49 %	50+ %
Favor	62	57	78	72	62	54
Oppose	35	39	20	26	36	41
Don't Know	3	3	2	2	2	5

	National					
		Ethnicity		Age		
	Total %	White %	Minority %	18-29 %	30-49 %	50+ %
Favor	59	56	82	70	62	49
Oppose	38	41	17	28	36	46
Don't Know	3	3	1	2	2	5

Two years ago the national totals favoring child care were somewhat lower — 55% in favor, 40% opposed. Minority support has increased from 70% to 82%; white from 53% to 56%. Preschool child care for all children is now viewed by a majority of respondents nationwide as an acceptable function of the public school system. In North Carolina the support for child care centers as part of the public school system is almost identical to the national figures.

Predictably, in both polls populations of respondents with the highest need for child care were most supportive of the proposal: minorities in contrast to whites, younger in contrast to older, less affluent compared to more affluent. Even in the least supportive groups, however, the division was approximately 50/50.

A second question concerning preschool programs focused on the issue of increasing taxes to fund such programs for children whose parents cannot afford the cost. Specifically, the question asked: Let's assume that preschool programs are to be paid for only by those parents whose children use the programs. Would you be willing, or not willing, to pay taxes for funding free preschool programs for those children whose parents are unable to pay for them?

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	North Carolina				National		
		Ethnicity				Ethnicity	
	Total %	White %	Minority %		Total %	White %	Minority %
Willing	66	62	84	Willing	61	59	81
Not Willing	31	35	15	Not Willing	36	38	17
Don't Know	3	4	2	Don't Know	3	3	2

Support for taxes to fund preschool and child care programs continues to hold at nearly two to one. Groups most likely to use the services indicate more willingness to pay taxes for the service in both the national and North Carolina polls. In North Carolina, 84% of the minority respondents, 80% of those under age 30, and 72% of individuals with incomes of less than $30,000 were willing to pay taxes to fund preschool programs.

Public School Services

One comprehensive question dealt with the provision of services by the public schools in the respondents' community.

I am going to read a list of health and social services that the public schools in your community might provide to students. As I read off each service, one at a time, please indicate whether you think the local schools should provide this service to students, or not.

The services included in the question were:

(1) examinations to detect sight and hearing defects

(2) examinations to detect dental needs

(3) free or low-cost luncheons

(4) free or low-cost breakfasts

(5) after-school care for children of working parents

(6) inoculations against communicable diseases

Services

	Sight and hearing defects %	Dental needs %	Free or low-cost luncheons %	Free or low-cost breakfasts %	After-school care %	Inoculations %
Should Provide						
North Carolina	93	71	91	82	71	85
Nation	92	58	87	74	62	84
Should Not Provide						
North Carolina	7	28	9	17	27	14
Nation	8	42	13	25	36	15
Don't Know						
North Carolina	-	-	-	1	1	1
Nation	-	-	-	1	2	1

In North Carolina, public support is so high for public schools to provide examinations to detect sight and hearing defects, free or low-cost luncheons, inoculations against communicable diseases, and free or low-cost breakfasts that they can hardly be considered continuing policy issues. Even in the lowest two service categories, dental needs and after-school care, 7 of 10 North Carolinians support provision of these services in the public schools. Nationally, these latter two categories are more controversial (6 of 10 respondents favoring support). Across-the-board, respondents in North Carolina exhibited more support for expanding school-based services to students than respondents in the national poll.

Uses of Standardized Tests

In the 1992 national poll respondents were asked about whether standardized national tests should be used for a variety of purposes. They were again queried in the 1993 poll about the uses of standardized tests.

In addition to measuring the academic achievement of students, do you think standardized national tests should be used or should not be used for the following purposes?

Uses of standardized tests	North Carolina			National					
				1993			1992		
	Should be %	Should not be %	Don't know %	Should be %	Should not be %	Don't know %	Should be %	Should not be %	Don't know %
To identify areas in which students need extra help	91	8	1	91	9	-	85	9	6
To identify areas in which teachers need to improve their teaching skills	87	12	2	87	11	2	79	14	7
To rank the local public schools in terms of student achievement	70	26	4	72	25	3	65	26	9
To determine if a student advances to the next grade level of schooling	67	31	2	70	29	1	60	32	8
To determine how much teachers should be paid	46	51	3	46	51	3	38	52	10
To determine the level of funding each local school should receive	43	52	5	49	47	4	36	54	10

The results suggest substantial confidence on the part of the public in the utility of standardized tests. In the national poll, support rose for every purpose from 1992 to 1993. There are, however, widely varying levels of support for the several uses of tests. There is strong support for tests being used to identify areas in which students need extra help and in which teachers need to improve. A majority favor using test results to rank schools in terms of student achievement and to determine if students are to be promoted. A majority opposed using tests to determine teachers' salaries and the level of funding for local schools. In North Carolina, the predominant use of test results tends to be for neither of the two purposes the public most prefers, but rather to rank public schools and public school systems.

The Proposed New North Carolina Test

The North Carolina General Assembly this year approved the Governor's request to establish a commission to define skills high school graduates will need to succeed in the modern work place and to develop a test measuring whether high school seniors have those skills. By the year 2000, seniors must pass this test to graduate. North Carolina respondents were asked whether they support the development of the test and whether they would be willing to pay more taxes to provide additional help to students unable to pass the test.

In order to graduate from North Carolina high schools now, students must pass a sequence of required courses and also pass a general competency exam. A proposal has been made to develop new standards for what students need to know and what they need to be able to do to compete in the work place. Students would then have to pass a test to measure whether or not they meet these new standards. From what you know about this now, would you favor or oppose adding such a test as a graduation requirement?

	North Carolina
	Total %
Favor	72
Oppose	25
Don't Know	3

The test enjoyed broad support among men and women, whites and minorities, and all age, educational, and income groups. The broad support for developing and implementing the test did not carry over into support for funding programs for students who fail the test.

If significant numbers of high school seniors were unable to pass this new work place skills test, would you be willing to pay more taxes for additional programs so that these students could graduate from high school?

	North Carolina				
		Ethnicity		Age	
	Total %	White %	Minority %	18-29 %	50+ %
Yes	48	45	62	55	40
No	49	54	32	44	55
Don't Know	3	2	6	1	5

Respondents were split on the funding, with 48% willing to pay more taxes for help to students and 49% unwilling. Responses varied by ethnicity and age. Most minority and younger respondents were willing to pay more taxes to provide remedial assistance programs for students who had failed the test. Most whites and older respondents were not.

Disparities in Educational Quality and Funding

The disparity of educational quality among school districts and the relationship between educational quality and educational expenditures have been discussed in legislatures and courts for more than 20 years. Respondents were asked about the disparity and the relationship.

Just your impression, how much would you say the quality of the education provided by the public schools in your state differs from school district to school district?

	North Carolina	National
	Total %	**Total %**
A great deal or quite a lot	60	62
A great deal	34	33
Quite a lot	26	29
Not too much	33	30
Not at all	3	1
Don't know	4	7

How much does the amount of money spent on a public school student's education affect the quality of his or her education?

	North Carolina	National
	Total %	**Total %**
A great deal or quite a lot	64	68
A great deal	36	38
Quite a lot	28	30
Not too much	30	25
Not at all	4	5
Don't know	2	2

In both polls, a majority of respondents said that, in their opinion, the quality of education varied substantially from district to district and the amount of money spent on education affected the quality of education.

Respondents were asked four questions about what should be done to reduce the disparity in educational quality and educational expenditures among school districts.

The quality of the public schools varies greatly from community to community and state to state, because of differences in the amount of taxes taken in to support the schools. Do you think more should be done to improve the quality of the public schools in the poorer states and in the poorer communities?

	North Carolina	National
	Total %	Total %
Yes, more should be done	92	90
No	7	8
Don't Know	1	2

Would you be willing or not willing to pay more taxes to improve the quality of the public schools in the poorer states and poorer communities? (Asked only of those who had responded "yes" to the preceding question.)

	North Carolina	National
	Total %	Total %
Willing	75	68
Not willing	23	30
Don't know	1	2

Do you think that the amount of money allocated to public education in your state, from all sources, should or should not be the same for all students, regardless of whether they live in wealthy or poor school districts?

	North Carolina	National
	Total %	Total %
Should be same	88	88
Should not	10	10
Don't know	2	2

Support for equal funding has grown since 1991, when the question was last asked in the national poll. At that time, 80% of the respondents said funding should be the same.

Do you think that the amount of money allocated to education in your state should or should not be the same for all students, even if it means taking funding from some wealthy school districts and giving it to poor school districts?

	North Carolina	National
	Total %	Total %
Should be same	86	85
Should not	11	12
Don't know	3	3

The solution that funds be reallocated from wealthy school systems to poor school systems is considered by most policy makers to be controversial. Nonetheless, 80% to 90% of respondents in all income groups in both polls supported the idea.

In summary, in North Carolina and across the country the public agrees that:

1. the quality of education varies from district to district,
2. the amount of money spent on education affects the quality of the education provided,
3. more should be done to improve schools in poorer areas,
4. they would be willing to pay more taxes to improve education in poorer communities,
5. the same amount of money should be spent to educate all students, whether they live in rich or poor communities, and
6. the same amount of money should be spent on all students, even if that means reallocating money from wealthier school systems to poorer school systems.

Values and the Public Schools

An initial query asked respondents about the possibility of attaining consensus in their community on basic values that would be taught in the public schools. The result indicated that a substantial majority believed that this would be possible.

Do you think it would be possible to get people in your community to agree on a set of basic values, such as honesty and patriotism, that would be taught in the local public schools?

	North Carolina	National
	Total %	Total %
Yes	73	69
No	24	27
Don't know	3	4

When the respondents were presented with a list of values (albeit somewhat more controversial than patriotism and honesty) the possibility of arriving at consensus turned out to be more problematic.

I am going to read a list of different values that might be taught in the public schools. For each one tell me whether you think it should be taught, or should not be taught, to all students in the public schools in your community.

Values	North Carolina			National		
	Should be taught %	Should not be taught %	Don't know %	Should be taught %	Should not be taught %	Don't know %
Honesty	98	2	-	97	3	-
Patriotism: love of one's country	94	6	1	91	8	1
Caring for friends and family members	94	5	-	91	9	-
Acceptance of people of different race and ethnic backgrounds	94	5	1	93	6	1
Acceptance of people who hold different religious beliefs	88	11	1	87	13	-
Acceptance of people with different sexual orientations; that is homosexuals or bisexuals	46	51	3	51	46	3
Acceptance of people who hold unpopular or controversial political or social views	71	24	4	73	24	3
Sexual abstinence outside of marriage	70	28	2	66	32	2
Acceptance of the right of a woman to choose abortion	57	41	2	56	42	2
Democracy	94	4	2	93	6	1
The Golden Rule	93	5	2	90	6	4
Moral courage	93	5	2	91	8	1

At least 87% of the respondents agreed that eight of the twelve values should be taught in the public schools. Two of the remaining four values drew smaller, but still substantial majorities, i.e., acceptance of people with unpopular political or social views and sexual abstinence outside of marriage. Respondents were divided sharply on teaching the remaining two values, i.e., acceptance of the right of a woman to choose abortion and acceptance of people with different sexual orientations. Efforts to include such controversial values in the curriculum would undoubtedly stimulate vigorous debate in most local school districts. The most difficult problems would probably be raised by teaching acceptance of people with different sexual orientations, since it drew the least support in both polls (a minority in North Carolina) and, to complicate matters further, acceptance of the value is divided along demographic lines.

Acceptance of People With Different Sexual Orientations.

	North Carolina					
	Gender		Ethnicity		Age	
	Men %	Women %	White %	Minority %	18-29 %	50+ %
Should be	40	50	42	59	53	39
Should not be	57	46	55	36	46	55
Don't know	2	4	3	3	2	6
	National					
	Gender		Ethnicity		Age	
	Men %	Women %	White %	Minority %	18-29 %	50+ %
Should be	46	55	48	63	61	46
Should not be	52	41	49	36	38	50
Don't know	2	4	3	1	1	4

Extending Time for Learning

The current education reform movement began largely as a response to a concern about America's competitiveness in the international economy. Not surprisingly, early reformers looked at the longer school year in Japan and Western Europe and recommended that America lengthen its 180-day school

year. The Gallup/PDK poll included questions about lengthening the school year for most of the last decade. Initially, a majority opposed the idea. Last year, a bare majority favored it. This year, more options about extending time were included.

Some public schools in the nation have increased the amount of time students spend in school by extending the school year or the school day. Do you favor or oppose increasing the amount of time students spend in school in the public schools in your community?

	North Carolina			National		
	Total %	College grad. %	H.S. grad. %	Total %	College grad. %	H.S. grad. %
Favor	51	56	45	52	58	47
Opposed	47	41	53	47	40	51
Don't know	2	3	2	1	2	2

Both North Carolina and national respondents are divided on this question. In both polls, college graduates were more favorable of the idea of extending time in school than high school graduates.

A more specific follow-up question was asked.

Which one of these plans for increasing the amount of time students spend in school would you prefer — increasing the number of days in the school year, increasing the number of hours in the school day, or having classes on Saturday morning?

Options	North Carolina	National
	Total %	Total %
Increasing number of days in school year	49	47
Increasing number of hours in school day	28	33
Saturday morning classes	6	5
Any combination of these	2	2
None of these	14	12
Don't know	1	1

Respondents in both polls supported lengthening the school year above any other option. However, public support for any option for extending time for learning is problematic.

Year-Round School

A number of school systems in North Carolina have changed their yearly calendar, not by increasing the number of school days, but by spreading those days throughout the year. This is sometimes called the year-round school. These school systems, for example, might have children attend school for nine weeks, have three weeks off, and then start another nine-week term. Respondents were asked about this proposal in the 1992 national poll. A majority of 73% favored no changes in the calendar, while 16% favored distributing three-week vacations throughout the year and 11% responded, "Don't know." This year, the question was not asked in the national poll. It was asked in the North Carolina poll because of the interest in the idea around the state.

Options	North Carolina Total %	1992 National Total %
Keeping as now	64	73
Three week vacation breaks	33	16
Don't know	3	11

The school year is now 180 days long, with a summer vacation. Some people have proposed dividing the school year into equal segments with three-week vacations evenly distributed throughout the year. The number of school days would be the same either way. Which do you prefer?

Although reports from schools that have adopted a year-round calendar have been generally positive, most respondents in the poll preferred to retain the traditional school calendar. This response was consistent for both sexes, all ethnic groups, and all age groups. North Carolinians' opposition to the year-round school calendar was less than that of the national respondents in 1992, and twice as many favored the year-round school.

School Choice

Throughout the 1980s, options increased for many parents to choose the school their child attends. Some advocates for school choice at public expense would restrict the choice to public schools; others would broaden the choice to include private schools. In the current poll, respondents were asked:

	North Carolina Total %	National Total %
Favor	66	65
Oppose	32	33
Don't know	3	2

Do you favor or oppose allowing students and parents to choose which public schools in your community the students attend regardless of where they live?

The same question had been asked in the national poll in 1991. The results were very similar to current polls, i.e., favor, 62%; oppose, 33%; don't know, 5%. At least 60% of the responses in all subgroups now favor public school choice.

Support for choice drops sharply when the option of choosing a private school at public expense is added.

	North Carolina	National
	Total %	Total %
Favor	21	24
Oppose	77	74
Don't know	2	2

Do you favor or oppose allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense?

Respondents were also asked about the public accountability of private schools if tuition payments were made to those institutions.

Do you think private schools that accept government tuition payments for these students should be accountable to public school authorities or not?

	North Carolina	National
	Total %	Total %
Yes	63	63
No	33	34
Don't know	4	3

In North Carolina even non-public school parents favored accountability to public school authorities (61%). Nationally, non-public school parents were the only subgroup that departed markedly from the overall response rate, with 40% favoring public accountability.

A key question in the choice debate is how choice would affect public schools.

What effect do you think allowing students and their parents to choose the student's school would have on the public schools in your community? Do you think it would improve all the schools, hurt all the schools, or would it improve some and hurt others?

	Total		Those Favoring Public School Choice		Those Opposing Public School Choice		Those Favoring Private School Choice		Those Opposing Private School Choice	
Effects	NC %	Nation %	NC %	Nation %	NC %	Nation %	NC %	Nation %	NC %	Nation %
Improve schools	21	21	29	27	7	10	36	39	18	16
Hurt schools	8	6	4	3	17	11	4	3	9	6
Improve some hurt others	67	69	65	66	72	76	58	54	70	75
Don't know	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3

This hypothetical question elicited an equivocal response. Those favoring choice — public or private — were more than twice as likely as those opposing choice to think that choice would help all schools. Those opposing choice were more than twice as likely as those favoring choice to think that choice would hurt all schools. In general, however, half to two-thirds of those favoring choice and three-fourth of those opposing choice believe it would help some schools and hurt others. Among all respondents, only one in five was confident in asserting that choice would improve all schools.

TEACHING AS A CAREER

Factors affecting the recruitment of outstanding students into teaching were explored through a general question about the status of teaching and specific questions about why minorities are not choosing teaching as a career.

General Status of Teaching

All respondents were asked:

Would you like to have a child of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

	North Carolina	National	Southern Regional
	Total %	Total %	Total %
Yes	60	67	69
No	37	29	27
Don't know	3	4	4

The national total reflects a continuing increase over the last decade. After being as low as 45% in 1983, the percentage of respondents saying they would like to have a child of theirs become a teacher reached 58% in 1988, but dropped to 51% in 1990. This year's total is a 20-year high.

The negative difference between North Carolina respondents and the national poll is not explainable as a regional phenomenon, since the overall positive responses are slightly higher in the South than in the national sample; i.e, 69%-67%. In the North Carolina poll, responses varied by demographic factors, such as education, income, occupation, and ethnicity. In the national poll they did not. The following table illustrates the variation found in the North Carolina poll:

Demographic Variations in the North Carolina Poll Related to Parents' Response to Teaching as Their Child's Career

	North Carolina								
	Education		Income			Education and Occupation of Parents			
	College Grad. %	H.S. Grad. %	$50k+ %	$30-49.9k %	Under $30k %	College Grad. %	H.S. Grad. %	White Collar %	Blue Collar %
Yes	52	64	48	58	66	55	76	55	69
No	45	35	49	39	31	43	21	43	27
Don't know	3	1	3	3	3	2	4	2	4

Higher income North Carolina respondents who were college-educated, white collar workers, and white were less likely to want their children to become teachers than similar respondents in the national poll.

Recruiting Minorities to Teaching

Although in answering the previous question at least 80 percent of minority respondents in both polls said they would like to have their child become a public school teacher, both school systems and colleges of education report having difficulty attracting minorities to teaching. Five factors that have been argued in the literature to impede recruitment of minorities into teaching were examined in the poll.

As you may know, a relatively small percentage of people from minority groups enter the teaching profession. As I read off possible reasons for this, one at a time, please tell me how important you think that reason is in keeping minorities out of teaching. Do you think (low salaries, low prestige or status, little chance for advancement, not being able to afford the college preparation required for teaching, believing they will face discrimination in the teaching profession) is very important, quite important, not too important, or not at all important?

	Percentage Ranked Very or Quite Important					
	North Carolina			National		
Factors	Total %	White %	Minority %	Total %	White %	Minority %
Low salaries	64	60	79	60	57	68
Low prestige	48	44	64	45	43	57
Little advancement	59	55	76	56	52	77
Cost of preparation	69	66	78	73	72	80
Discrimination	44	38	66	48	45	69

There is little solace in the results for those interested in recruiting minority candidates to teaching. Over half of all minority respondents in North Carolina and across the country ranked all five factors as very important or quite important. Factors that seemed relatively unimportant to white respondents (low prestige and discrimination) were also of relatively less concern to minorities, but still received nomination in two-thirds of the cases. Low salaries were a special concern for minority respondents in North Carolina. Everyone agreed that the cost of preparation to become a teacher is a very significant impediment to the recruitment of minorities into teaching.

Special Interest Topics

Four issues of special interest were examined with single poll items: the range of course offerings in high schools, school violence, prayer at graduation ceremonies, and the distribution of condoms in schools.

Range of High School Course Offerings

National reformers, state education policy makers, educators, and parents have debated the relative benefit of providing a wide variety of offerings or focusing on a few subjects in revitalizing the high school curriculum. Respondents were asked:

Public high schools can offer students a wide variety of courses, or they can concentrate on fewer, basic courses, such as English, mathematics, history and science. Which of these two policies do you think the local high schools should follow in planning their curriculum — a wide variety of courses, or fewer but more basic courses?

	North Carolina					
		Ethnicity		Age		
	Total %	White %	Minority %	18-29 %	30-49 %	50+ %
Wide variety	51	48	62	70	52	35
Fewer basic courses	47	50	35	29	46	62
Don't know	2	2	3	1	2	3
	National					
		Ethnicity		Age		
	Total %	White %	Minority %	18-29 %	30-49 %	50+ %
Wide variety	48	46	56	63	52	32
Fewer basic courses	51	52	42	37	46	66
Don't know	1	2	2	-	2	2

The total population of respondents within North Carolina and across the country cannot decide which policy it would prefer. But sub-groups can. Minorities prefer a wide variety of courses and so do younger respondents. There is an almost startling correlation of preference by age. Young (18-29) respondents prefer a variety as vigorously as older (50+) citizens opt for concentration on fewer basic courses.

The Problem of School Violence

Because of the increasing incidence of violence in North Carolina schools and the coverage of this condition in the media, a specific question on school violence was added to the North Carolina poll:

How serious is the problem of school violence in your community?

		Ethnicity		Age		Academic Standing of Oldest Child		Grade of Oldest Child	
	Total %	White %	Min-ority %	18-29 %	50+ %	Above Avg. %	Avg. or below %	H.S. %	Below H.S. %
Very serious	23	22	29	31	21	12	26	20	17
Serious	34	33	34	29	32	39	32	41	32
Not very serious	30	31	23	28	32	33	33	33	32
Not a problem	12	12	14	11	13	15	9	6	18
Don't know	1	2	1	1	2	1	-	-	1

Over half (57%) of the North Carolina respondents rated the problem of school violence as serious or very serious. The problem is viewed as somewhat more serious by minority and younger respondents. As students reach high school, the issue is viewed by parents as more serious, but half of the parents with children in grades below high school are concerned about it. Parents with students whose academic standing is perceived by the parent as average or below are more worried about violence than parents who think their child is doing above average work in school.

From whatever perspective the problem is examined, a majority of parents and citizens see school violence as a matter of serious or very serious concern in their communities. This is consistent with two general questions in the poll that provided opportunity to respond to this concern, i.e., the biggest problems facing education and the ranking of national goals. North Carolina ranked fighting/violence/ gangs as the second biggest problem facing schools in the United States and lack of discipline/more

control as the biggest problem. In both the North Carolina and national polls, freeing schools of drugs and violence and providing a disciplined environment for learning was the highest ranked national goal.

Prayer at School Graduation

Many school systems in North Carolina and across the country have felt caught between following the law by implementing a U.S. Supreme Court decision forbidding prayer at public school graduations and acceding to community pressure favoring prayer. The Gallup/PDK poll addressed this issue in the following question:

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that conducting religious prayers at any public school graduation ceremonies is unconstitutional, because it violates the First Amendment, which concerns the separation between church and state. Do you, yourself, believe that prayers should or should not be part of public school graduation ceremonies?

	North Carolina			National		
		Age			Age	
	Total %	18-29 %	50+ %	Total %	18-29 %	50+ %
Should	86	77	92	74	61	83
Should not	12	21	6	23	36	14
Don't know	2	1	2	3	3	3

The total response in North Carolina and the nation leads to the conclusion that despite the Supreme Court ruling the public clearly favors a policy that allows religious prayers at graduation ceremonies. The public position is age-related. In both polls younger respondents (18-29) were more likely than older respondents age-related to agree with the court. However, even within the younger group the majority favored allowing prayer at graduation ceremonies.

Distribution of Condoms

In 1992, the Gallup/PDK education poll asked a series of questions to measure local support for the distribution of condoms in the schools. To the surprise of many, 68% approved of condom distribution, although 25% added the condition of approval only with parental consent. The current poll followed up on this finding with a focused question:

Which one of the following plans regarding condoms would you prefer in the public schools in your community — provide condoms for all students who want them, provide condoms only to those students who have the consent of their parents, or don't provide condoms to any student?

Options	North Carolina				
		Ethnicity		Age	
	Total %	White %	Minority %	18-29 %	50+ %
Provide for all students who want them	39	39	39	55	23
Require consent of parents	20	19	25	20	18
Don't provide condoms	40	41	34	24	56
Don't know	2	1	3	1	3
Options	**National**				
		Ethnicity		Age	
	Total %	White %	Minority %	18-29 %	50+ %
Provide for all students who want them	41	40	46	61	26
Require consent of parent	19	18	23	16	17
Don't provide condoms	38	40	26	22	52
Don't know	2	2	5	1	5

Support for the distribution of condoms declined from 1992 to 1993 in the national poll. The total favoring distribution dropped from 68% to 60% and those who would not provide condoms to any student rose from 25% to 38%. Twice as many younger respondents (18-29) as older respondents (50+) favored distribution of condoms to all students who want them.

For 60% of respondents, the issue is not whether to distribute condoms, but how. Although the majority favors distribution of condoms in schools, respondents differ on the best way to carry out this policy. In both polls this is another age-related policy issue. Three-quarters of the youngest respondent group favor distribution of condoms in schools. Over 50% of those aged 50+ are opposed to their distribution.

Research Procedure for North Carolina Survey

The Sample

The sample used in this survey included a total of 803 adults (18 years of age and older). It was an unclustered, directory assisted random digit sample of telephone households statewide.

In order to avoid various sources of bias, a random digit procedure designed to provide representation of both listed and unlisted (including not-yet-listed) numbers was used. The design of the sample ensured this representation by random generation of the last two digits of telephone numbers selected on the basis of their area codes, telephone exchange (the first three digits of a seven digit telephone number), and bank number (the fourth and fifth digits).

The final sample was weighted so that the age by sex by education distribution and the sex by race distribution of the sample matches current estimates derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey for the adult population living in telephone households in North Carolina. The final weighted sample provided data sufficient to compare responses by sex, ethnicity, age groups (from 18-29 to 65 and older), educational level attained by the respondent (from some high school education to college graduate), annual income (from less than $20,000 to $50,000 and over), and by parents of children attending public schools versus respondents with no children in public schools.

Interview Schedule

The interview instrument used in the study was prepared by Phi Delta Kappa and the George H. Gallup International Institute. This collaborative survey of public opinion about education has been conducted annually for 25 years. Five questions of special interest to North Carolina were added to the national survey by the North Carolina Educational Policy Research Center, School of Education, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Procedure

Interviewing was completed from June 3, 1993 through June 18, 1993.

The national Gallup/PDK poll was conducted from May 21 through June 9, 1993.

Within each contacted household, an interview was sought with the youngest man 18 years or older who was at home. If no man was at home, an interview was sought with the oldest woman at home. In addition, a quota was set so that 50% of completed interviews were with females and 50% with males. This method of respondent selection within households produces an age distribution by sex that closely approximates the age by sex distribution of the total population.

Up to five calls were made to each selected telephone number in order to complete an interview. The time of day and the day of the week for callbacks varied so as to maximize the chances of finding a respondent at home. All interviews were conducted on weekends or weekday evenings so that potential respondents who work full-time could be contacted.

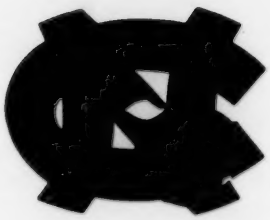
Analysis of Data

The data were analyzed and the report was prepared by Professors Howard Maniloff and David Clark for the North Carolina Educational Policy Research Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Introducing the Center

The North Carolina Educational Policy Research Center was established in 1991 through a contract to the University of North Carolina School of Education from the State Board of Education. The mission of the Center is to strengthen the information base for educational policy decisions in North Carolina to enhance outcomes of schooling for children. The Center seeks to accomplish this mission by:

- conducting policy research and analysis;
- preparing research reports examining broad policy issues, policy briefs providing concise information about specific issues, and quarterly newsletters;
- disseminating research-based information on educational policy issues to North Carolina policy makers, educators, and community leaders;
- providing a forum for the discussion of educational policy issues; and,
- training future educational leaders in the conduct and use of policy research.



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